(d) the details of steps taken to improve the quality of coal required by Thermal Power Plants in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) and (b) Government has not imported any coal to meet the demands of consumers. Such imports are made by the consumers themselves on quality consideration and commercial prudence. Coal being under OGL, its import is not monitored *by* Ministry of Coal. However, the details of coal imported into the country during the last five years as available with Ministry of coal are as follows:

Year	Import (In tonnes)		Value
	Coking	Non-Coking	Tolal
1993-94	0.57	7.39	Rs. 1463.29 crores (Ap- 6.82
1994-95	1.24	11.39	Rs. 2264.16 crores (Ap- 10.15
1995-96	3.14	12.51	US$. 925.6 million
1996-97	4.53	14.31	Rs. 3532.00 crores (Ap- 9.78
1997-98	6.56	17.21	Rs. 4422.30 crores (Ap- pro*) 10.65

(c) The bulk of imported coal is coking coal required by steel plants. Steel Plants are importing coal for the following reasons:—

(1) To bridge the gap between the requirement and indigenous availability of coking coal of the required quality.

(2) To improve the quality of overall blend for technical reasons for improving performance of blast furnace.

Some TPSs and cement plants located near to the coastal region are also importing coal because the present level of custom duty and railway freight structure which is favourable for imported coal.

(d) Coal companies are in a position to meet the full requirement of the TPSs. There has been substantial improvement in the quality of coal being supplied to the power stations as a result of which the electricity generated and the plant load factor (PLF) achieved by the TPSs has gone up. Coal Companies are setting up coal handling plants and feeder breakers to improve the quality of coal supplies to the TPSs. To check complaints on quality of coal, coal companies have agreed with the Council of Power Utilities to have sampling and analysis of coal both the loading and unloading ends by the same Independent 3rd Party Agency.

Fall in demand for coal

777. DR. Y. LAKSHMl PRASAD: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Singareni Collieries Ltd. has expressed concern over the fall in demand for coal;

(b) if so, the reasons for fall in demand; and

(c) the steps proposed to mine quality coal at competitive costs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There has been shortfall in demand of coal in the country because of general economic recession. The other reasons for reduced offtake of coal includes.

(1) Cement Companies are increasingly using imported coal which is cheaper than domestic coal in certain locations.

(2) Quality of coal is comparatively superior.

(3) Offtake of coal by power sector is reduced because of the stock availabel with power houses and because of increased generation from hydel power stations.

(c) The cost of domestic coal at pitheads is probably the lowest in the World. However, the cost to the consumer is higher owing to rail freight and high level of royalty and other imports on domestic coal as compared to imported coal.